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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003084

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: FURTHER IRAQI REACTIONS TO AMB CROCKER, GEN
PETRAEUS TESTIMONY

REF: BAGHDAD 3059

Classified By: Political Counselor Matt Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: The Embassy and PRTs have continued to gather reactions to the joint testimony of the Ambassador and General Petraeus. In general, Shi'a leaders remain pleased with the testimony, while some Kurds criticized the focus on Anbar. The Baghdad PRT collected reactions from a dozen Iraqis across Baghdad, who did not know that their views were being channeled to the USG. Several were disappointed that the Ambassador and the CG did not offer a plan to change the government to one that is less sectarian, but also expressed fear that Iran would physically occupy Iraq if Coalition Forces left. Our PRT in Diwaniyah heard similar comments from nearly a dozen Iraqis from all walks of life. Unless otherwise noted, the following reactions were garnered in face-to-face conversations with Emboffs and PRT members. End summary.

More Shi,a reaction

¶2. (C) Khalid al-Atiyya, Deputy Speaker of the CoR: "The report was practical and balanced ... overall it was positive and based on the reality and facts in Iraq and took into account the challenges faced by the government."

¶3. (C) Haitham al-Husseini of the Supreme Iraqi Islamic Council said that he and some of his colleagues were generally pleased with the remarks but were a bit surprised that Prime Minister Maliki was given little credit and support. Zuhair Humadi, senior advisor to Vice President Abdel Mehdi, conceded that the report accurately pointed out a lack of political progress but lamented that the USG had not done more to help the Iraqi Government achieve reconciliation.

¶4. (C) Sa'ad Sofouk, CoR member (Iraqiyya) from Karbala: "After having a chance to read through the testimony I feel very positive about what they stated . . . We all appreciate the sacrifices of all multi-national forces especially the Americans in helping the Iraqi people to bring stability to the country. The Government of Iraq has to capitalize on the opportunity offered by the Americans to achieve prosperity and Justice for all (the) Iraqi people."

More Sunni reaction

¶5. (C) DPM Zuba'i (who has technically resigned): Iran should have been portrayed more widely and negatively in the testimony. "Iran is not helping Iraq, but is fighting on Iraqi land and supporting insurgents with weapons," said Zuba'i. He added that Iran is also investing over \$1 billion dollars in Iraq. Zuba'i said the testimony focused on the improved capacities of the Iraqi Army without mentioning "the

damage that the MOI and MOD have caused."

More Kurdish reaction

¶6. (C) DPM Barham Salih said he was concerned that Shi'a and Sunni Arabs were reading their own messages into the testimony. He claimed that PM Maliki and his advisors were interpreting various statements as endorsement of their role. Barham worried that the result would be an attempt to stack the cabinet with weak party officials or Sunni puppets. Sunni Arabs were very happy at the focus on Anbar and overly swayed by expressions of frustration over Maliki. Barham Salih predicted that both sides would overreach and reconciliation efforts would suffer a setback.

¶7. (C) Water Minister Latif Rashid last night said reactions to most elements of the hearings were positive with one exception. The negative reaction he heard consistently was "excessive focus" on Anbar. He said there were other areas of Iraq that were showing progress as well and people were complaining that the Americans kept talking about Anbar as though everywhere else was bad.

¶8. (C) Reaction in the Kurdish Region has been muted, with slim press coverage and no photos. A commentary by Tawana Osman in Rozhnama newspaper gave a pointedly critical assessment of the "strategy of arming Sunni tribes" in Anbar, saying that the cooperation there is between the Sunni tribes and the U.S., not the tribes and the Iraqi government, and will not be sustainable once U.S. forces leave. Two newspaper editors note with some disappointment that there was no mention of the Kurdish regions in the testimony, although they were heartened by the fact that a U.S.

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withdrawal does not appear imminent.

More Man on the Street Reactions

¶9. (C) Hadi, a male law professor in Baghdad's Karada district: The testimony given by both men was very close to the reality on the ground in Baghdad.

¶10. (C) Hani: a female civil society professional visiting from Basrah: The report only confirms that the Maliki government has not reached the targets that they promised Iraqis: progress on security and addressing poverty and the economy. It is bad to reduce troop levels by the summer of 2008 . . . Iraq must find someone without loyalties to one party and other countries -- however, no one can get elected at the moment without a strong political party and support from other countries.

¶11. (C) Zuhair, a male judge, Rusafa district: The report was good, but underplayed the danger that still exists in Anbar. The situation there is better, yes. However, it is only better for the American military . . . it is still not safe for Shi'a who want to travel the Turibeel road between Baghdad and Amman, Jordan. America should not withdraw any forces for the foreseeable future. The insurgents in Anbar and other parts of Baghdad realize they cannot fight the Americans at the moment because they (the Americans) have the momentum -- they will lay low and wait for the Americans to draw down their forces.

¶12. (C) Iman, an IDP displaced from Amel to Dora: The information presented that claimed the situation is improving for Iraqis is "insulting."

¶13. (C) Six Baghdad PRT Locally Employed Staff: Our local employees believe that the Ambassador demonstrated uncertain support for PM Maliki . . . In general, they are confused by the continued American support for the PM given the variety of faults found with him. They believe the PM relies

completely on American support, yet is free to openly act against America on foreign policy matters. In particular, they cited the PM's recent visit to Tehran, which coincided with the anniversary of the Iran-Iraq war. Many employees expressed a desire to bypass the current Iraqi government altogether and work solely with U.S. forces. This was a constant and recurring theme throughout the interviews -- the lack of confidence in the current Iraqi government to address the important issues facing the nation.

¶14. (C) A 24 year old woman in Diwaniyah with a BA in Business Administration: "The withdrawal of American forces will make a vacuum that can be exploited by Iran . . . I think it would be better for American forces to stay in Iraq longer."

¶15. (C) A male chemistry teacher in Diwaniyah: "The improvement in the security situation is due to Mr. Bush's strategy of requesting 30,000 additional troops. Mr. Petraeus did not address the sectarianism within the Al-Maliki government."

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